

Testimony in favor of:
HB-6355 An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders or Warrants

Submitted by:
Donna Grossman
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Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Donna Grossman, I am from Windsor and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I am testifying in favor of HB-6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders.

In 1994, I received a phone call from my sister's neighbor: my brother-in-law Art had committed suicide. He had been feeling depressed and had an appointment that afternoon with a psychiatrist. My sister left work early to go home to go with him to his appointment. When she got there, she found his truck but not him. She became concerned and called the police. The police searched the woods behind their house and found his body. He had taken his hunting rifle, put the end in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. Besides my sister, he left a 12-year-old daughter. He was a wonderful father and a wonderful uncle to my children.

Because there are often warning signs preceding violent or suicidal behavior this last-resort temporary removal measure with due process protections is an effective tool for reducing gun violence. These warning signs are why my sister called the police when she could not find her husband instead of just waiting for him to come home. Because firearm suicide accounts for up to two-thirds of gun deaths and is the second leading cause of suicide in Connecticut, there is an urgent need to strengthen our ERPO law to help it save more lives.

Opponents of the bill claim that ERPOs lack due process protections and are abused by family members. Neither of these is true. An ex parte process is used that is virtually the same as the one used for issuing domestic violence restraining orders and the subject is entitled to a court hearing, presided over by a Judge, before the order is extended beyond 14 days. There is no evidence that the process is used to harass gun owners; judges are required to have clear and convincing evidence to issue final risk protection orders.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donna Grossman
Windsor